



Music Review:
Great Duos for Violin and Cello
Label: MAP

June 15, 2007

By MIRIAM ALLENSON

Outside the rarefied world of classical music, neither **David Chan** nor **Rafael Figueroa** is a household name: a shame when you think about it, considering that both are excellent musicians. Both are members of the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra; Chan is concertmaster and Figueroa is principal cellist. Both have won top prizes for their respective instruments: Chan, the Tchaikovsky International Competition in Moscow and Figueroa, the Gregor Piatigorsky Competition in Boston and the bronze medal at the International Pablo Casals Competition in Budapest. Both are musicians committed to the performance of music for the sake of its intrinsic importance. With the release, *Great Duos for Violin and Cello*, they have produced an important recording.

Great Duos for Violin and Cello features the work of three masters: Ravel, Kodaly, and Handel, the first two 20th century contemporaries. Ravel and Kodaly belong to the first two works on this CD, the former's "Sonata for Violin and Cello," and the latter's "Duo for Violin and Cello, Op 7." Both have the feel of the 20th century in

their harmonies and tonality. Ravel's Sonata, classically structured, has an ascetic beauty to it. By contrast Kodaly's "Duo" is a rich, emotional imagining of the native music of Hungary the kind of music that Kodaly and fellow countryman Bela Bartok went into the Hungarian countryside to record in the early 1900's. The third work on this recording is a Handel "Passacaglia," arranged by late 19th-early 20th century Norwegian composer, Johan Halvorsen.

In the scheme of things, *Great Duos for Violin and Cello* won't garner the interest among large numbers of people that a recording of other works by these two great composers would: for Ravel, "Bolero," and for Kodaly, the "Harry Janos Suite." But of themselves these two works for violin and cello are by turns beautiful and hypnotic, lyrical and spare. Chan and Figueroa do great justice to both. It's a treat to listen to this ensemble of two. It would be a good thing to hear more from them in the future.